

# HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

## SHRI VINOBA'S NORTHERN TOUR

## IV

## Through the Narmada Valley — II

*Rajwans*

After Sagar, came Mehar, Rajwans and Malthon all in the same district. At Rajwans Vinobaji visited several houses in the village. He went to the Harijans, shoemakers, *telis*, carpenters, *brahmans*, *Jains* and others. He was surprised to find large silver and nickel ornaments on the legs of the women, and asked them why they bore such heavy punishment for no fault of theirs. He also advised them to give up *purdah*. He was glad to see that the roofs of the houses were utilized for growing vegetable creepers. Practically every roof was covered with some creeper or the other, which brought forth good greens.

The public meeting was a sort of model basic lesson. One of the villagers wanted to know from him about Hinduism. Vinoba gave five-fold definitions:

1. Earn your bread by your labour. Never tell a lie.
2. Serve your neighbour.
3. Serve the cow.
4. Pray and take *Ramanama* on rising and before retiring.
5. Hate ye none.

Vinobaji did not finish the class until he got the full definition repeated by at least one of his students. One after another he made them stand, helped them speak and they obtained 50 to 60 per cent marks. But he wanted someone to secure full marks. Ultimately a *purdah* woman repeated all the five definitions correctly. She was loudly cheered.

To a question regarding frustration in post-Swaraj expectations, he put a counter question: "How many years is it that Swaraj has come?" "Twenty," said one, "Eight," said another. Similar replies followed. He had already anticipated this. Vinoba said to them, "You are not to be blamed. I know you are not properly informed. This is the fifth year of Swaraj. But the question is, are you going to sleep even after the Swaraj or are you going to help yourselves? If you don't want to help yourselves, God is not going to help you. He is not going to shower food and cloth. His mercy can be manifested only in the form of rains upon the plains beneath. It is you who have to sow grains for food and cotton for cloth. If you will keep sleeping even after the sunrise, you cannot feel the warmth. Therefore awake, arise and start working."

I must not forget to mention a touching incident of this village. A woman anticipated that Vinoba would come to her house. She hurriedly went in, poured a bucketful of water on her head, came out with her wet clothes and fell prostrate on the ground to offer her *pranams* to the Baba.

*Malthon*

At Malthon the last village in Madhya Pradesh, he poured out all his mind before the people. There was hardly any land worth cultivation, they said. They had to depend on other villages for food. Some of them did

own lands outside the village yet they gave him 30 good acres.

It was the last day in Madhya Pradesh. He explained how he wanted to spread his message throughout the country. He spoke on self-sufficiency also. He did not believe in the economics of Yashoda which was based on money, and wanted to propagate Krishna's economics based on distribution. Krishna did not like that butter which was meant for local consumption specially by children should be exported to city markets to fetch money. Vinoba was pained to see that villagers exported cotton and imported cloth, sold *til* and purchased oil, sold honey and purchased sugar, sold butter and purchased *vanaspati*. In short, in exchange for nectar they took poison. And all this for the sake of money. He was for *Samyayoga*—distribution of commodities produced by the villagers to the villagers according to their needs. If they did that, every village would be transformed into the kingdom of God.

The villagers requested him to prevail upon the Government to install a good hospital in that village, in the absence of which the death rate was going very high. Vinoba said that the mortality was going very high for lack of proper nourishment and not for lack of proper medicines. Did their forefathers take all these modern medicines? They fasted for a day or two and eliminated the very cause of the disease. He explained how medicine was absolutely unnecessary if they lived a natural life and how it was futile in the absence of such life. He wanted them to thank God for the delay caused in starting the hospital and asked them to give up the idea, altogether. "Produce herbs in your own village and use them as medicines. If you start a hospital, your money will be drained to foreign countries through the medicines. You will lose both money as well as health."

Explaining his *bhoodan* mission, he said that he wanted them to realize its significance. It was not only giving but it was renunciation of their very right of ownership. Everyone should give as he would do to his own son. He did not want to damage the prestige of the big land-lords by accepting small gifts from them. He was sure that if they did not give that day they would give it on the next day. He also warned them not to be proud of their gifts. A father never took pride in giving to the son his due share. If he gave to the *Daivdranarayana* as he would do to a son it would bless both him that gave and him that took. In the end he made it clear that the failure of his mission meant the success of the Communist ideology and they had to choose between the two.

The total collection in Madhya Pradesh has come to over 6,400 acres, donated by 563 donors. Out of these, 541 have given less than 25; 9 between 25 and 100, and 13 have given more than one hundred. It was necessary to appoint a committee for Madhya Pradesh to distribute the lands so far obtained, and also to get more lands for distribution. The choice unanimously fell on Dadabhai Naik who had been accompanying Vinoba throughout the tour. The Charkha Sangh could not spare him without much inconvenience. But this cause was no less important

and promised a good scope for propagating the *khadi* idea. He was nominated as the convener of the committee with two other colleagues, Shri Appa Gandhi of Nagpur and Shri Rajendra Malpani of Amraoti. All the three are able and experienced men who have a band of young friends around them who will give them such assistance as may be necessary from time to time. They are all devoted to the cause of *bhoodan*. Like Dadabhai, Shri Rajendra Malpani also accompanied Vinoba during the tour and is still an active member of the party. The team undoubtedly will work earnestly and diligently, but as Vinoba has said it is a committee of zeroes whose strength will increase with the number of figures preceding them. Vinoba expects people of all groups to give their full co-operation to the committee.

Before closing I may mention that there was hardly any place where Vinoba was not asked his advice regarding the forthcoming elections. He had definite views on that point and freely gave out his mind. In one of the meetings, he replied, "I am definitely against giving the vote to those who believe in violence, as also to those who belong to communal institutions." As regards candidates standing on behalf of various political parties, Vinoba repeated his opinion that voters should see the integrity and ability of the person seeking election, and should not be influenced by mere party considerations. He also added that political differences should not affect friendly relations. That was according to him the rule of sport in the election campaign which should be observed by all concerned. He narrated how he and Jai Prakash prayed and worked on the same wheel at Paramdham Ashram and how both of them could seek elections without an injury to the friendship in the least.

He very much appreciated the efforts of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru for the internal purification of the Congress as also his untiring efforts to close up the Congress ranks. Vinoba hoped that the efforts of Shri Nehru would bear fruit. He was however of opinion that the purpose of purification would not be achieved if it had only election as its immediate objective. Purification demanded a programme based on service and sacrifice, he said.

I have been receiving letters inquiring about his health. I can understand the anxiety of the friends all over India. It is really a miracle that in this advanced age and with the duodenal ulcer constantly teasing him, he covers such long distances. But as he himself says, no one knows who gives him power to do all this. Is not the Lord's mercy daily manifested through him? But let us not be anxious, for He gives power to the faint and to them that have no might he increases their strength. The secret of the whole affair may be expressed in George Herbert's following words:

Teach me my God and King  
In all things Thee to see,  
In what I do in any thing  
To do it as for Thee.

D. M.

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#### NOT SO EASY

As a result of my recent article in *Harijan* entitled "But where are the Kisans and Mazdoors?", one of the political parties has asked me if I would contest a seat on their behalf in the coming elections. No doubt that would give them a representative who lives in a hut and knows how to milk a cow, but it is not so easy as all that. I am only a *kisan* by adoption, and there would be nothing very difficult about making a person like me an M. L. A. or a Minister, as I have the intellectual training. We have got to do something much more revolutionary. We have got to make Ministers of hereditary *kisans*, who have lived on and worked the land for untold generations. As Bapu says, these *kisans* need not be literate provided they have "robust common sense, great personal bravery, unimpeachable integrity and patriotism above suspicion." People of such character are to be found amongst the peasantry, especially in the far away villages, and it is these real people, full of age-old experience and wisdom, under whom we have got to put ourselves. We have got to humble our intellectual pride and bow our heads before the knowledge and endurance which bear up the burden of the world. When I look at a sun-burnt, weather-beaten *kisan* working in his fields, I see before me a vision of the power which sustains mankind. If he were not there, ever working, ever watching, planning and praying, none of us would be anywhere. It therefore stands to reason, especially in India where the vast majority of the people are villagers, that the *kisan* should guide the nation, and the intellectual should serve and help him.

Of course great care and intelligence should be exercised in selecting these *kisans*, for all *kisans* are not angels. The cunning type has got to be avoided. The type who employs labour and behaves like a petty Zamindar has got to be avoided. The "politically-minded" type has certainly got to be avoided. Those should be chosen who have the attributes set forth by Bapu, and they will most often be found amongst the "one-pair-of-bullocks" standard of *kisans*, who, along with their whole family, work with their own hands. They must not think that they are being chosen in order to be turned into gentlemen, but rather that they are being chosen in order to turn the gentlemen into *kisans*.

Once again, I appeal to the political parties — now is the moment to scrap the present unsuccessful and corrupted methods, and to take the brave step which Bapu has shown us. Indeed it is the Congress which should have done this thing long ago. After the many years of struggle under Bapu's guidance, which led it to triumphant victory, this step should have been the natural corollary. But when full power came into its hands the Congress began to think it knew better than its *guru*, with what fatal results we now see!

Gopal Ashram, Tehri-Garhwal,  
20-10-'51

MIRA

#### PANNAI ASHRAM NOTES — IV

On the 1st of September the Bullock Puja festival of *Pola* was celebrated with great *eclat*. The animals were painted and elaborately decorated and led outside the village and then they entered ceremonially under bunting and festoons with torchlights. Kumarappaji was called upon to say a few words before the herd of cattle was admitted. He said, "Today you have shown great devotion to your bullocks. You have treated them as members of your families, nay even worshipped them by offering *puja* to them. Amongst the people also there has been a good deal of neighbourliness demonstrated. It is all to the good. God, the Creator, manifests Himself in many ways. This festival acknowledges the fact that God's help comes to us through these animals also. Hence you worship these today as agents of God's goodwill. With us this takes the form of a religious rite.

"In the West also they have an animal festival once every year, but there it is not celebrated with religious fervour. In Great Britain probably Ascot is a parallel. Here horses—their old beast of burden—are made to race and the *elite* gather together in their best fineries, gamble and drink. The celebrations are marked by a spirit of competition, unlike ours, which is shadowed by religious ceremonies and distinguished by co-operation. Hence our economy was intended as a non-violent one leading to mutual goodwill. After this ceremony the bullocks go from house to house and visit their neighbours who wash their hoofs and offer *tilak*.

"Thus these *Pola* celebrations are beautiful and significant. But how shall we treat these representatives of God Mahadev from tomorrow? We prod them with sharp nails mounted on the goads, we torture them with their nose strings and neglect their wounds and diseases. We are then guilty of doing all these to God Himself whom we pretend to worship today. God is not so easily deceived. So beware lest He visit us with curses which we richly deserve. I trust from now on, those of you who use such prodding rods will extract those sharp points and treat your animals with the affection and regard you showed today."

After this Shri Niranjan Lodi, the *Sarpanch*, said: "Till now it has been the custom to allow the animals of the *malguzar* to lead the procession with torches, but I suggest that from today we change that order and allow the animals of the Pannai Ashram to lead." This was unanimously agreed to and proudly did our bullocks march past. Thus the reign of violence and exploitation yielded place to love and service.

On the 3rd of September President Rajendra Prasad passed this village on his way to Wardha and the villagers garlanded him on behalf of the Pannai Ashram.

#### Self-help

At Kumarappaji's suggestion a group of villagers who attend our meetings formed an *Am Sabha* of three. This *Sabha* will be responsible for the village work.

#### Swaraj Chowk

As the attendance at our evening prayer was becoming too numerous for the verandah where we were holding it, the *Am Sabha* approached the owners of three ruined house sites for permission to use that place. This having been given, the debris was cleared by all the villagers joining in the effort and we are now holding our meeting etc. at this place which has been termed *Swaraj Chowk*, as Kumarappaji explained that *Swaraj* will come only when we are able to solve our own problems and this is the first problem the new *Am Sabha* had solved.

#### Communists etc.

Prof. Bang visited the Ashram on the 7th of September and had a long interview with Kumarappaji on various matters. To the question how to deal with the "Communist Menace", Kumarappaji said "Taken at the proper level the question has a simple solution, though it is difficult of execution. There are definite grievances on which their movement is built. This is true rock-

bottom on which they build their structure of discontent and violence. If we want to oust them we have to take the same foundation and build with contentment and non-violence. Their cementing force is material welfare but we have to use a stronger adhesive power in the form of moral and spiritual values. When these standards are properly cultivated there will be emerging from it a true form of equality and justice which will take the place of greed, avarice and hatred. This way is long and can be attained through the means of *Nai Talim*. All other short cuts are dangerous however attractive they may seem at first."

On being asked how much capital an agriculturist would need, Kumarappaji replied "We are using the word 'capital' in a wrong connotation. We understand in the present industrial set-up this term in a different way. In agriculture we have no 'capital' in that sense. What is used will not breed 'interest' and 'profit'. Even land is only an instrument that will work according to the dexterity of the wielder. Land, bullocks and the plough are to the farmer what wood, chisel and plane are to the carpenter. Agricultural Economic terms have yet to be defined. This is especially so under our conditions where agriculture is an occupation for subsistence rather than an industry as in the U.S.A."

#### The Cycle of Life

On the 8th of September after evening prayers there was a thunder-storm. Those who came to the prayer stayed on longer. Kumarappaji took the opportunity to explain the round of daily life. He told them rain water came from the sea, which most of the audience had not seen. From the salt water by evaporation pure water was taken up into the air by the action of heat from the sun. Then by the action of air currents, electric forces, etc. the stream comes down as rain. When the water reaches the earth it is more or less pure water excepting for slight acids and impurities that are picked up in the air. Then he pointed to the greenish water, that was flowing out from the yard and asked why that water was green. Some answered that it was because it was mixed with cattle dung. Then he asked what was the deep brown colour of the water on the streets due to and what it contained in addition. A villager quickly replied "mud and night soil". Then Kumarappaji said, "Now you see that the pure rain water sent by God is turned into gutter water by the action of man. This water runs from Seldoh into the *nalla*, from there into the river Wardha, which falls into the Wainganga, which in turn loses itself into the river Godavari, which empties itself into the sea. The river Godavari is regarded as Ganga-mata, a goddess." By using the roads to ease themselves they were polluting a goddess with night-soil. "We think it atrocious if an iconoclast smashes a stone *murti* but let us remember that every morning when we go to sit on the road our act is equivalent to smearing the face of the Divine with night-soil. Such an act of desecration can only result in a curse."

"On the other hand, see the portable latrines used in the Ashram. The trench receives the stools and the urine which are covered by leaves and earth and finally converted into manure. This is fed to the earth which returns crop yields several times that of ordinary soil."

After this explanation the villagers were much interested in getting such trench latrines built for themselves.

On the 12th of September Vinobaji, with his band of pilgrims, passed through Seldoh on their way up to North India. They stayed for about a day and were heartily received by the villagers. In his two speeches Vinobaji exhorted them to be united and work together for the common good and not be led away by the ruinous spirit of party politics in the coming elections as well as in the management of their own affairs. He congratulated them in having a leader like Kumarappaji amongst them and counselled them to follow his advice on all matters.

R. R.

# HARIJAN

Nov. 10

1951

## SOME CHARGES Food Habits

"All of us have a tendency to live in the old ruts. Take our food habits. If we miss something that we are used to, we are very annoyed and angry. If we are used to rice, we must have rice, come what may.

"I have no objection at all to a person who likes rice to eat rice, or a person who likes wheat to eat bread, but it is a question of adjusting ourselves to certain obvious difficulties. In Europe and many countries of Asia, where war has had very far-reaching effect, the entire food habits of the people have had to be changed by force of circumstances."

"Mr Nehru cited the instance of sugar and pointed out that in England people got one or two spoons a week and sometimes even that was not issued. Still the people put up with it. In India people were so "sugary that difficulties would arise if there was less sugar and Food Ministers had to import sugar". The country would not be able to go far unless the people were prepared to change their habits during a period of difficulty."\*

The charge may be partially true against middle-class people. But it cannot be laid against the people of the labouring classes. Of course, they too, would prefer to have the cereal, the pulse and the oil to which they are accustomed, but when these are not available they very quickly accept, even seek for themselves, any substitute — not excluding grass and bitter roots. Indeed, they are puzzled when even their substitute foods become commercialized. Secondly, it is not the mental perversity or idiosyncrasy which is mainly responsible for the preference of a particular cereal, pulse or oil. It is a matter of experience that a body accustomed from childhood to a particular kind of cereal, pulse, or oil, does not draw adequate nourishment and even reacts adversely to their substitutes. Food chemists, cock-sure of the correctness of their chemical analysis and experiments on rats, might not find any remarkable difference between *jowar* and *bajra*, millets, wheat and rice corns, *tur*, *mung* and *chana dals*, and *til*, *sarson* and groundnut oils. But the human digestive system does, and the body gets emaciated even with the consumption of adequate quantities and, if predisposed to illness, quickly contracts some ailment.

And then, the conduct of those responsible for administration is itself a great contributing factor to the annoyance and anger of the people. They perceive before their very eyes banquets and feasts on luxurious and wasteful scales, involving the use of the very cereals, sugar etc. which are denied to them, being repeatedly held. They also see or hear that Government officers

\* All the quotations are from Shri Jawaharlal Nehru's speech in the *sansad*, as reported in the *Hindustan Times* of 17th Oct., '51.

and even ministers participate in them and when questioned in the Assemblies, the explanations which are given do not carry conviction. Distribution of adulterated, spoiled, stinking and even inedible food-stuffs is not unknown. They find that rich and influential men are able to flout the laws with the active help of the administration. They read that persons convicted in the court of trial are often acquitted on appeal, not on the ground that the case was fabricated, but because a clever lawyer was able to point out some technical defect in the law or procedure. And they find that year after year these questionable practices are rather on an increase than otherwise. How can the people under these circumstances feel convinced that the shortages are real and universal, and that they must sympathetically co-operate with the Government in the administration?

### The Black Market

"But there was one matter which troubled him and his colleagues to some extent. This was what was popularly referred to as 'black-market money', on which there was no control and which never came into any picture of Planning. There was a good deal of resentment against this black-market business and all of them had expressed themselves strongly against it.

"But this was 'a serious problem from the Planning point of view as well as the social point of view'. Various State Governments had tried to exert themselves on this subject and sometimes had succeeded in some measure. Some people had also been convicted though 'these individuals are what are called small fry but not the big fry'. When a small individual indulged in black-marketing though it was bad, it was only an individual offence. But when these bigger people indulged in it, it became a social problem.

"Though it had not been mentioned in the Plan, the Planning Commission was considering how to deal with this 'as a matter of urgent consequence'. In the situation that existed today it was difficult to deal with it in view of the difficult and slow process of law. The people involved were fairly big and because huge sums of money were involved, there were huge temptations. The law itself was intended to deal with normal matters. Inevitably, even when cases were put up the trials dragged on for two or three years and the cases just collapsed. A way must be found to deal with the problem. Mr Nehru said: 'If it is necessary to take fresh and additional powers, I am quite sure that this Parliament would not grudge it and the country would approve of it, provided this great social evil is properly dealt with.'

In this connection, I humbly ask not to lay too much stress on tightening of penal and control laws. What is needed is not deterrent, heavy punishment of an individual or two, but a vigilant curb over all, without favour or fear. Governments have been known to exist, which have resorted to breaking the knees of thieves, hanging dacoits, flogging those who used false measures etc. Crime has not decreased thereby, because every severe penalty stimulates the resourcefulness and gains of law-breakers, lawyers and corrupt administrators. The penal laws will have to be there. But they are the least factor in the purification of life. A few body-

guards may be necessary for a king or a minister, but if the Home Minister thought that he could make these great men free from the risk of being assassinated, he would be disillusioned some day. So also with regard to other criminal laws.

A social evil can be put down only by moral training and good examples of the leaders. And herein, a large number of ministers, parliamentarians, rich and well-to-do men are guilty of lavishness and moral—if not always literal—transgression of their own laws. We are told that the public discipline is very high in European countries. I believe that this is true of England. But I have reason to believe that the moral degradation and flouting of laws is quite rampant in some of the countries of Europe, and in America, Africa, Australia and a great many countries of Asia. So far as our country is concerned, my own feeling is that if the people at the top advance one step in the direction of sincere and patriotic self-denial, the people will advance five. By their very temperament and traditional training, they are gentle, law-abiding and always mentally prepared to take suffering as an inseparable part of life. They have been gravely sinned against for centuries, and yet have not become desperate. The heart of the common people is, on the whole, sound. The evil that appears is on the surface like a mud-splash on the clothes of a pedestrian caused by the motor-car of a rich man driving on a rainy day. The response which the Shuddha Vyavahar Mandal gets is both encouraging and depressing. It is encouraging because several middle-class traders and consumers have expressed their desire to live honestly and not to resort to any corrupt practice, but they put forth problems and seek advice for the solution of the practical difficulties in their way. The difficulties are mostly the creation of the control laws, the administrators of laws, unscrupulous traders and rich industrialists. The situation is depressing because the organizers are often unable to suggest a way out, unless they advise civil resistance. So far hardly a single great industrialist or commercialist seems to have thought that honest life is a practical proposition.

#### Labour of Students

"The old National Planning Committee had recommended that every young man should be compelled to work for a year or two in the fields or factory before a diploma was awarded. By this method the country would benefit and the young men would also improve in physique and mind. Some Provincial Governments had tried it and found considerable difficulties. Some beginning even in a small way should be made. Later on, the next step would be to make every young man between 20 and 22 years put in compulsory labour."

The reports, which I often receive from students' organizations, and our own experience of training camps are encouraging. Students have been giving far better work than might be expected from the type of training they receive. If a child is trained for the life of a clean and

fashionably dressed lady or gentleman from the age of three to twenty years, and is to revert to it at twenty-two, we cannot expect her or him to be a good and efficient field or factory worker for a period of one year at twenty-one. A 'civilized' child is made to feel at as early an age as possible that it is naughty if it allows its limbs to be smeared with dirt, if its clothes get wet or spotted with mud, that it is good or clever if it can decipher the alphabet from a newspaper heading or count upto twenty at the age of three. A good girl or boy is not expected to spend too much time in playing. And if he or she plays it must be a modern civilized game—like cricket, foot-ball, or tennis. Not a limb is trained or a habit ingrained, which will enable him to work with the pick-axe, or be in the sun and the rain for some hours at a stretch. Even students whose parents are themselves actual cultivators, artisans or factory labourers, lose their inherited muscles and working capacity and skill after six to ten years of modern education and city and hostel life. They are hardly to be blamed, if they are unable to give a good account of themselves, if they are suddenly asked at twenty-one to put one year of service in a village or a factory. He becomes a misfit in the field, and might even spoil the village life. He or she might go to the village as a self-appointed honorary agent for Kodak, Parker, Eveready, Bata, Nilgiri, Virginia, Lipstick etc. and display the latest fashions of saris, pyjamas, blouses and other varieties and infect some of the village youths with them, much to the annoyance of their parents.

If students are to be made along with their academical studies, good field and factory workers also, the training needed must be imparted from the very beginning.

Let me not be misunderstood. These comments are not made to argue against Shri Nehru's remarks. His remarks are appropriate and I endorse them. The people must not feel that if the things are going wrong, all the fault lies with the Government; that the people are good and would be better still, if only the administration improved. The people must remember that the administration cannot improve unless the people improve both in their ideas and in their conduct. All the same administrators must go deep into the matter and realize that the people cannot, with all their goodwill, improve unless there are sufficient men in the administration who are models of high character, and unless the administrative system is basically revolutionized, simplified and quickened.

Wardha, 20-10-'51

K. G. MASHRUWALA

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## THE WAGE SYSTEM

(By Peter Kropotkin)

Service rendered to society, be it labour in factory or field, or moral service, cannot be valued in monetary units. There cannot be an exact measure of its value, either of what has been improperly called its 'value in exchange' or of its value in use. If we see two individuals, both working for years, for five hours daily, for the community, at two different occupations equally pleasing to them, we can say that, taken all in all, their labours are roughly equivalent. But their work could not be broken up into fractions, so that the product of each day, each hour or each minute of the labour of one should be worth the produce of each minute and each hour of that of the other.

Broadly speaking, we can say that a man who during his whole life deprives himself of leisure for ten hours daily has given much more to society than he who has deprived himself of five hours a day, or has not deprived himself of any leisure at all. But we cannot take what one man has done during any two and say that his produce is worth exactly twice as much as the produce of one hour's work from another individual, and reward each proportionately. To do this would be to ignore all that is complex in industry, agriculture, the entire life of society as it is; it would be to ignore the extent to which all individual work is the outcome of the former and present labours of society as a whole. It would be to fancy oneself in the Stone Age, when we are living in the Age of Steel.

Go into a coal mine and see the man stationed at the huge machine that hoists and lowers the cage. In his hands he holds a lever whereby to check or reverse the action of the machinery. He lowers the handle, and in a second the cage changes the direction of its giddy rush up or down the shaft. His eyes are attentively fixed upon an indicator in front of him which shows exactly the point the cage has reached; no sooner does it touch the given level than at his gentlest pressure it stops dead short, not a foot above or below the required place. And scarcely are the full trucks discharged or the empties loaded before, at a touch to the handle, the cage is again swinging up or down the shaft.

For eight or ten hours at a time he thus concentrates his attention. Let his brain relax but for an instant, and the cage would fly up and shatter the wheels, break the rope, crush the men, bring all the work of the mine to a standstill. Let him lose three seconds upon each reverse of the lever and, in a mine with all the modern improvements, the output will be reduced by from twenty to fifty tons a day.

Is it he who renders the greatest service in the mine? Or is it, perhaps, the boy who rings from below the signal for the mounting of the cage? Or is it the miner who risks his life every moment in the depths of the mine and will end one day by being killed by firedamp? Or, again, the engineer, who would lose the coal seam and set men hewing bare rock? Or, finally, is it the owner who has put all his patrimony into the concern, and who perhaps has said, in opposition to all previous anticipation: "Dig there, you will find excellent coal"?

All the workers engaged in the mine contribute to the raising of coal in proportion to their strength, their energy, their knowledge, their intelligence and their skill. And we can say that all have the right to live, to satisfy their needs, and even gratify their whims, after the more imperious needs of every one are satisfied. But how can we value exactly what they have each done?

Further, is the coal that they have extracted entirely the result of their work? Is it not also the outcome of the work of the men who constructed the railway leading to the mine, and the roads branching off on all sides from the stations? And what of the work of those who have tilled and sown the fields which supply the miners with food, smelted the iron, cut the wood in the forest, made the machines which will consume the coal, and so on?

No hard and fast line can be drawn between the work of one and the work of another. To measure them by results leads to absurdity. To divide them into fractions and measure them by hours of labour leads to absurdity also. One course remains: not to measure them at all, but to recognize the right of all who take part in productive labour first of all to live, and then to enjoy the comforts of life.

(From *The Conquest of Bread* (1888), reprinted in *Freedom*, 8-9-51).

## SHRI VINOBA'S TELANGANA TOUR

### VI

April 18, Pochampalli (Fourth Halt, 12 miles).

This was the first village in Nalgonda district which along with Warangal has become particularly notorious for the Communist menace. Though the two previous halts were also in Telangana and there was evidence of the Communist menace even there, yet it was more like a preface, the real book having begun now.

The Dandakaranya proper also begins from here. Hayatnagar and Batasingaram were like two gates to it. On either side of the road, there is a thick forest, which provided the Communists a good hiding place convenient for attacking travellers. The forest has been considerably thinned down now. The range of mountains provides a wonderful scene presenting the forest like a blooming lotus. In the fading moonlight before sunrise we covered ten miles, and arrived here at about 7-30. We were greeted as usual by the people of the wayside villages all the way. The people stood on either side of the road, singing *Ramadhun*. Up to Shivarampalli we had found that in the rush women and children were often nearly crushed. Hence instructions were issued to the public to stand on either side of the way. This appears to have been put into practice now.

We could now see the specialities of Telangana. The whole village was well cleaned, water was sprinkled at many places and some parts were also plastered with dung as is the custom here. On reaching the residence, we were welcomed with the recitation of *Vedic mantras* and a present of fruits, which pleased Vinoba much.

Pochampalli is a townlet of 700 houses with a population of 3,000. Among these there are 643 weavers, and 219 Harijans. Out of the 3,000, about 2,000 are landless. The number of *shindi*-drinkers is also about 2,000. The daily sale of *shindi* amounts to Rs 150/-. There are no teachers, but a Harijan worker has started a school of his own.

We also received an account of the Communist activities. This town was considered as their centre. We could get here much more information than what we had received in previous villages. There had been four murders here, and in the neighbouring village, Yeruri there had been three. The total number of murders in surrounding villages was 20. If somebody gave an information to the Police or Congressmen, he fell a prey to the Communist bullets. The number of Communists working in the centre is believed to be about a dozen. A camp of policemen has been stationed to search them.

We discovered that the house in which we were lodged was a school, with seven pupils and one teacher, who did not attend daily, but according to his own convenience. It was painful to see the wretched condition of the education of our future citizens.

Vinoba started for his village-round at 9-15 a.m. He went first to the Harijan *basti*. He went inside some of the houses. They were as clean within as without. The people of God cannot be different inside from what they are outside. In one of the houses, he saw a mother, only four days after confinement, sitting on the floor. The child was placed on the mat. Shri Vinoba took the child into his lap, and sat near its mother. "The child is blessed," ejaculated the mother. In between, her hands instinctively touched Vinoba's feet. Vinoba was not conscious of it, nor perhaps was she.

On coming out, we met a big crowd of Harijans. They demanded a separate school for their children. But they were ultimately convinced that the children should not learn in a separate school. It was decided to try for a better teaching arrangement. A site was needed for the building, and it was decided to approach the Tahsildar for this purpose.

#### The Beginning of the Land Gifts Mission

But these problems were of less importance. The main problem was that of land. "We want land for agriculture", was their cry. The total land in the village is 2,500 acres. Its population is 3,000, i.e. 3/4 acre per head. At present, all the Harijans work as labourers, and take in return 1/20th part of the produce, plus a blanket and a pair of shoes.

Vinoba enquired how much land they would require, and after some deliberation, they replied, "Eighty acres will suffice, 40 dry and 40 wet."

Vinoba doubted the sufficiency of the figure. He also asked whether they would cultivate on a co-operative basis or individually. They were willing to do it co-operatively, they said. Vinoba thereupon asked them to write out an application, and said he would try for them.

The other villagers were also there, and Shri Vinoba thought it desirable to consult them also.

"If the Government fails to grant the land" he asked, "will the villagers do something for them?"

Shri Ramachandra Reddi stood up and replied in all modesty: "It was my father's desire to give some land to these people. Hence on behalf of myself and my brothers I give a hundred acres of land." This was the first land gift and an unpremeditated inauguration of the land-gifts-sacrifice. Who could have imagined that this small incident was to initiate a non-violent revolution? In the evening at the prayer meeting, Shri Vinoba pointing towards the donor said, "If he fails to fulfil his promise, he will be a sinner in the sight of God. But if he gives his land it is your responsibility to work on it jointly. If we get such generous men in all towns, the Communist problem would be solved." These words rang in the ears like a prophetic utterance.

#### Drink

One more work was yet to be started that day. This problem was still more difficult than the previous one. Yet God wished to present a complete solution of the Telangana problem today, although in a miniature form.

"Who are addicted to drink?" asked Vinobaji of the Harijans.

"All of us."

"It is good that you have spoken the truth. But how long will it take to give it up totally?"

The headman of the Harijans discussed the matter with his friends. There was eagerness and gravity in the atmosphere. Within a couple of minutes the headman rose. All eyes turned towards him.

"Maharaj (Sir), we decide from this day that we shall not drink any more."

"Let them sign a pledge," was a cry.

Vinoba said "No. They are under the pressure of your obligation today. They may sign the pledge under that pressure. Drinking is a chronic habit and will vanish slowly. It is sufficient if they stick to their word."

#### Weaving

And then the third problem. The weavers complained that they did not get sufficient quota of yarn. They got only half a bale which engaged them only for a week. They had to remain idle for three weeks. "Please make more yarn available to us," they urged.

"Yes. This is an all-India problem," replied Vinobaji, expressing full sympathy for them.

"What then must we do?" asked the weavers. After a pause he began in a persuasive tone:

"Were there no weavers in our country when there were no textile mills? Did they sit idle, or did the people go naked? And look here; you yourselves do not use your own cloth. Does the farmer, who produces corn, purchase his *chapatis*? You are yourselves sabotaging your own

cause. As a matter of fact you should spin for your own cloth." Then showing his clothes, *dhoti*, *chaddar*, etc. Vinobaji said, "Look at this cloth. How good it is! It is all handmade. If you want to survive, you must pledge yourselves to spin."

The weavers said that cotton did not grow there.

"That is true", said Vinoba, "but did it never grow here? If you have given up growing cotton, start it again. The problem is not limited to Pochampally; it is an all-India question. And I understand that Government would not collect revenue if you grow cotton. But cotton can be purchased till it is not grown. It is better to purchase cotton than to purchase cloth."

Various individuals and groups including one of washermen, came with their problems, one after another till 5 p.m. This was followed by an open-air meeting under the shade of the *neem* and mango trees just opposite to our residence. It was five thousand strong. They had come from the surrounding villages. Vinoba was seated on the dais. With a view to be audible to all, he stood upon it, and recited his Telugu Gita. The people when they heard the Telugu Gita, seemed deeply moved. They felt that one of their own men had come to them.

In the course of his sermon, Vinobaji expressed in unambiguous words that it was impossible now in India for the moneyed class to hold more land in its possession. He also emphasized the importance of village industries and prohibition. He explained how the problems of village poverty and of weavers' yarn shortage were not capable of solution, unless they grew their own cotton, spun their yarn and got them woven locally, and also produced as many essential requirements of life as possible in the village itself. He also said that unless they gave up drinking their prospects were not bright.

A Committee of five people was appointed for the proper distribution and necessary legal action of the land received. The Committee consisted of five men, including two representatives of Harijans, one village Patel, the president of the Andhra Congress Committee, Shri Vyankatesh Reddi, and the donor Shri Ramachandra Reddi. It was revealed that Shri Narayan Reddi, the Communist leader of Hyderabad, was married to the sister of Shri Ramachandra Reddi, and both husband and wife are Communists to the fanatic degree. Shri Ramachandra Reddi, as it were, wanted to perform penance for the activities of his sister and her husband. The donation given by Ramachandra Reddi is significant from this point of view.

In this centre of the Communists, where there was little chance of a peaceful and studious life, people came to discuss social and spiritual problems with Vinobaji. In reply to a question, regarding *Varna* and *Ashram*, Vinobaji said that these, i.e. *varna* and *ashram*, were meant for all to be observed in all ages. We must purchase cloth from the weaver of our own village, and should buy oil from the village *teli*. Our shoes must be prepared by the local shoe-maker. It is thus that the *varna* system will survive. It is the same thing with *ashram*. In these days, people stick to their family life till the end. That is not good. *Vanaprastha* must be encouraged.

In reply to another question regarding the desirability of dining at the same table where non-vegetarian diet and wine were served, Vinobaji said that if non-vegetarian diet and wine were served on the same table they need not dine together, otherwise it was better to dine together. There was no harm in eating vegetarian diet on the same table with the non-vegetarians. They must remember the example of Rama and Shabari in the matter of food. The cat devours the rat and even then we allow it to sit by our side and feed it with curds and rice from our own dish.

To the last question which was regarding salvation, Vinobaji said, "Salvation means freedom from attachment, anger, desire, lust, ignorance etc."

D. M.

(Translated from Hindi)

### AN ATTEMPT TOWARDS SAMAGRA GRAM SEVA AT PEDARAVUR

(By P. Ramakrishnaiah)

After the publication of "Fifteen years of organized village work of Pedaravur" in *Harijan* dated 6-1-51, some of the readers took interest and asked me to publish the detailed report for one year touching all the problems in the village.

I give below an account of the work done to improve the condition of the village, by the village Panchayat, Multi-Purpose Society, Katal Mandal (Spinning Club) and Library Committee, during the last 12 months, from April 1950 to March 1951.

As per the latest Census, the population of the village is 4627. 1857 own lands and cultivate them themselves. 124 own lands, but give them on lease. 231 are landless, but take lands on lease. 1328 are landless and work as agricultural labourers, and their wages are in kind or money. 261 depend on small jobs, such as teachers, clerks and laskars etc., 159 on petty trades, 88 upon masonry, 71 on carpentry, 65 on gold smithy, 49 on shoe-making, 45 on pottery, 33 on tailoring, 36 on hair-dressing, 115 by washing clothes, 15 on basket-making, 9 on black-smithy, and the others work in hotels and mills, or practise medicine and some other small professions.

The village is a delta one and the villagers mostly depend upon cultivation. Of course, there are other supplementary resources, such as, spinning, dairying, road-making, rice-pounding, poultry, fishing, growing vegetables and gunny-making etc.

The area of the village is one fourth of a square mile and the houses are 1300 in number.

The income of the Panchayat is Rs 13,151-15-0 and the expenditure is Rs 11,575-6-0. Towards the providing and maintaining of latrines and urinals Rs 1436-5-0 were spent, for constructing rubbish depots, compost sheds, and a shed in the burial-ground Rs 1,117-11-6, for road-laying Rs 4,301-7-0, for scavenging and sweeping Rs 1,584-4-0 and for forming Avenues and Parks Rs 942-12-0. And there were other minor items of expenditure towards repairs for wells, bridges and culverts. Rs 800-0-0 worth of manual labour from the village was recorded. There is a big canal for navigation by the side of the village. The villagers have to cross the canal every day for cultivation purpose, as 600 acres of land in extent is on the other side of the canal. The villagers formed a committee and collected Rs 12,000-0-0 to construct a bridge over the canal and approached the Government for help. The Government passed orders, granting Rs 18,500-0-0 towards the construction of the bridge and directed the village Panchayat to take up the work. The Committee remitted the amount of Rs 12,000-0-0 to the village Panchayat and the Panchayat has resolved to take up the work. According to the Madras Village Panchayats Act of 1950, a sur-charge is levied in the area under the jurisdiction of a Panchayat, on transfers of property on the duty imposed by the Indian Stamp Act, and credited to the respective Panchayats. Moreover, the Madras Government has been pleased to enact to set apart every year, a sum not less than 12½ per cent of the total land revenue collected in the State during that year and distribute such sums in a prescribed manner as grants to II class Panchayats on the basis of their population.

I give below the figures for the year for the Panchayat:

Receipts:		Expenditure:	
Grass sales.	Rs. 4,918-0-0	Grass averages.	Rs. 225-7-6
Wind-fallen trees	31-0-0	Fishery	82-14-9
Sale of rubbish	15-0-0	Deposits	5-0-0
Weighing-paddy	50-0-0	Establishment	180-0-0
Rolling stone	12-3-0	Contingencies	187-7-4
Right of measuring and carting paddy.		Scavenging	1,584-4-0
and brokerage	281-0-0	Latrines	1,436-5-0

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Fees collection		Repairs	242-4-0
From soda, coffee, mutton vendors	73-0-0	Parks etc,	620-12-0
Permits to oil engines	95-0-0	Roads	4,601-7-0
Fish sales	742-0-0	Avenue	823-14-7
Land cess	529-0-0	Survey-charges	16-14-0
Sur-charge stamp & registration	5,665-0-0	Foot bridge	38-12-0
Avenues	653-0-0	Health	411-3-0
Interest	58-0-0	Sheds	817-11-0
Deposits	30-0-0	Rubbish depots	300-0-0

The Katal-Mandal is working with faith and devotion. There are fifty-two members. Shrimati Tulasamma with the help of the other members, is doing the work throughout the year. They were able to get one thousand square yards of cloth woven for the members during the year with the help of the local 'Charkha Sangham'. From 13th of July to 2nd October 1950, seventy wheels worked for two hours every day in connection with 'Charkha Jayanti.' They were able to spin 1024 hanks in that period. Instruction in carding and *tunai* for the teachers and pupils in the Girls' School was given for 100 days. There are two looms for cloth, a loom for *dari* (carpet) with rags and another for tape-making. Carpet-weaving from old garments is very popular. A simple apparatus is supplied to those who are keen on making *dari* themselves out of rags. Four carpets were prepared during the year. Regular spinning and prayer congregations were conducted with success. They have collected Rs 237-14-0 for Assam Relief Fund. The active members visit every house and persuade the house-owners to provide urinals, soak-pits and latrines within their houses. So far in fourteen houses accommodation for privy is provided. And in some houses, provision for compost-manuring from urine and night-soil is made. The Katal Mandal members clean and clear the drains and grass-sprouts in the streets occasionally. A trained Hindi-teacher is engaged in conducting the classes for the youth of the village. A box for bee-keeping is provided. The villagers are helping the Mandal in their activities. Shri P. Nagaiah gave a site worth one thousand rupees for constructing a building to be named after Gandhiji. Two others gave six hundred rupees for promoting any of the constructive activities, and a lady subscribed one hundred rupees to construct tube-well. Three of the Katal Mandal members took a vow not to wear gold or silver hereafter and gave away the ornaments on their body at the time of the vow to further the cause of Gandhian ideals. Now the Mandal decided to establish a 'Gandhighar' in the village and to seek the help of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi.

The Library Committee was able to collect Rs 956-6-0, during the year. Rs 728-15-0 was spent for the purchase of books, and for the repairs of the building. The number of the members increased.

The Multi-Purpose Society was able to supply manures worth Rs 4,470-6-0 and iron worth Rs 241-7-6 during the year. The number of the members increased from 35 to 50.

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